

Understanding and responding to Anxiety : Getting closer to a life filled with Wellness

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Process



Content

Where are you ?

Past



Future

STOP & RAIN



Stop

Take a breath

Observe

Proceed



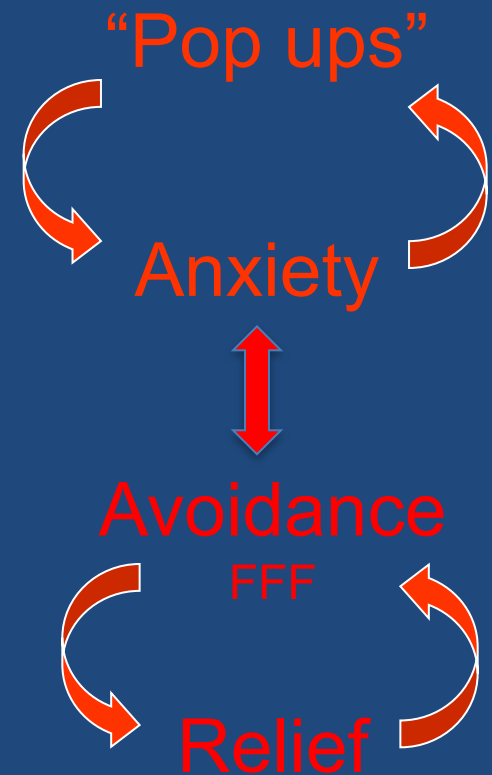
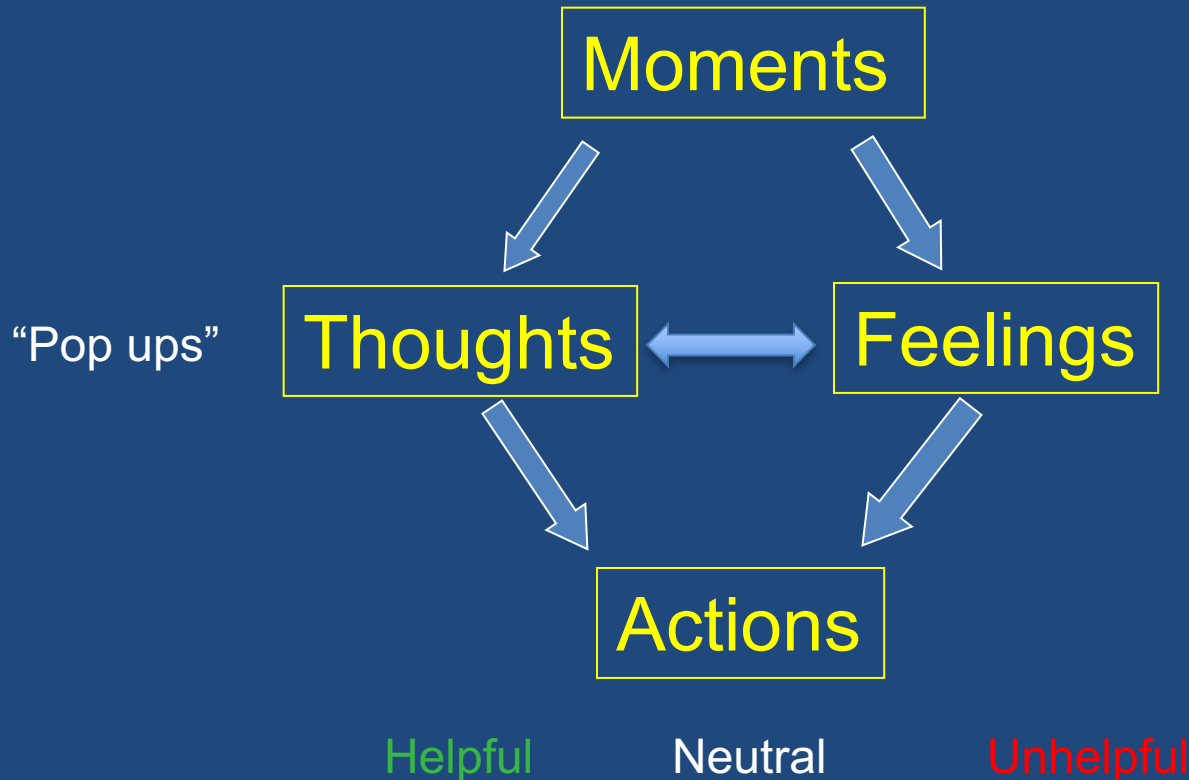
Recognize

Allow/Accept

Investigate

Natural arising

Mindfulness : Content



"Anxiety does a good job of pretending to be my friend"

Mindfulness : Process

Attention



Awareness



Choice



Intention



Wiser Mind



Wiser Action



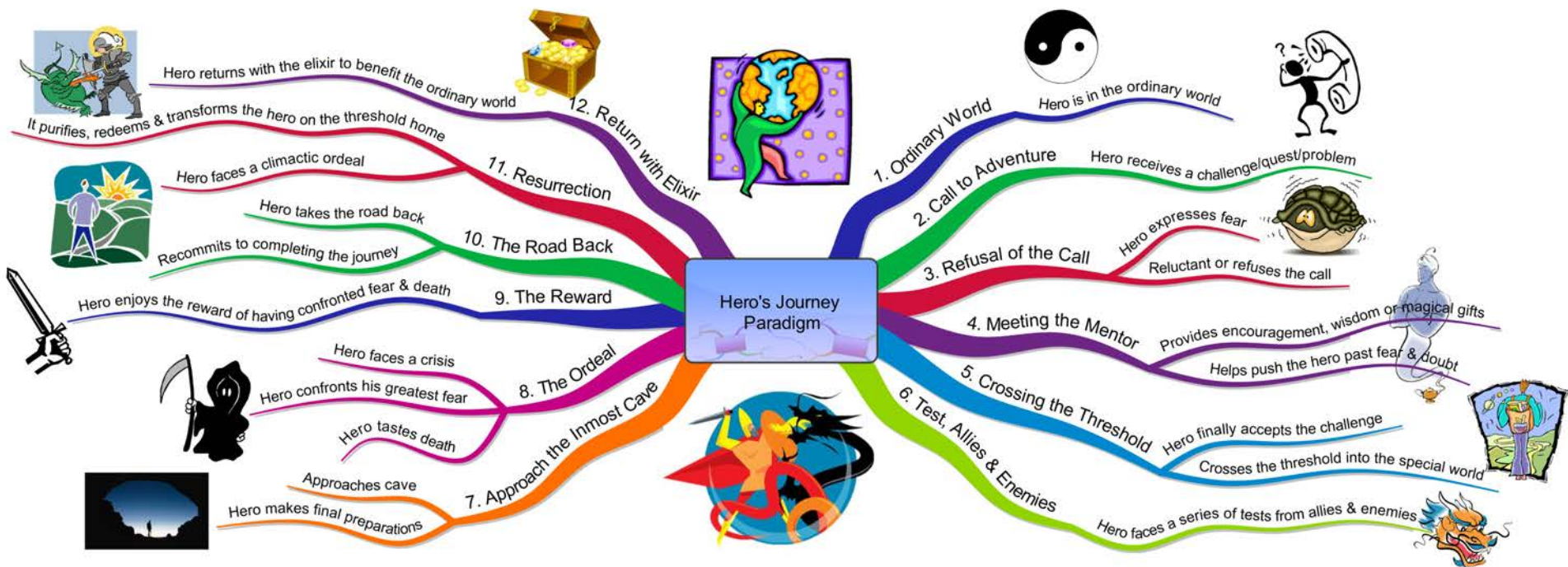
Better Outcome = Human Curriculum = My Life

The Quality life we all want

- Academic
- Behavioral
- Cognitive
- Developmental
- Emotional
- Family
- Physical
- Social
- Screens
- Spiritual
- Volunteering
- Work



Hero's Journey



"We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to accept the one that is waiting for us."

Joseph Campbell

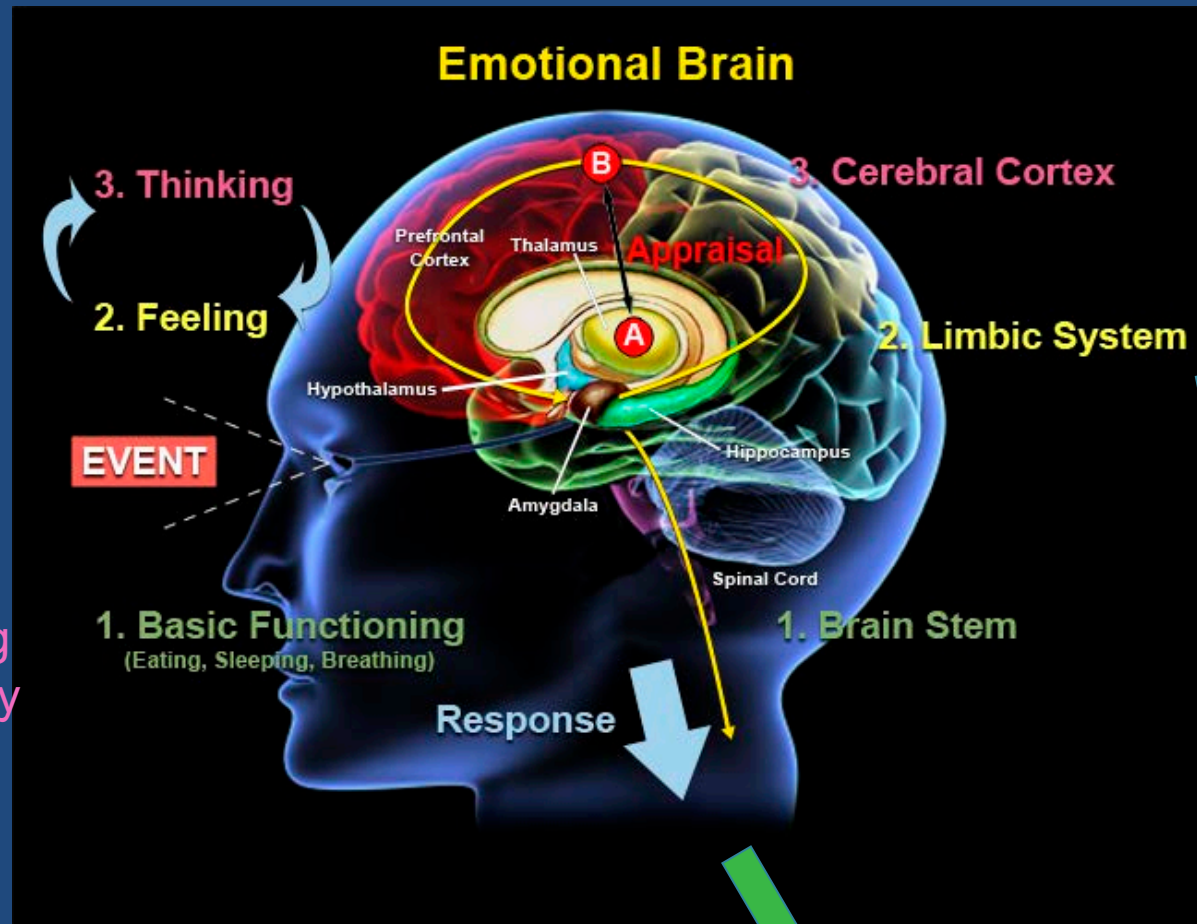
Learning Objectives

- Describe how and why Anxiety arises in the Mind
- Describe how our usual ways of reacting to Anxiety are not useful
- Describe a simple Mindfulness process for responding to anxiety in helpful ways.
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A few opening comments

- Root word : Anxious, Anger, Anguish = Torment
- Synonyms : worried, scared, nervous, frightened, uneasy, uncomfortable
- Anxiety is just a signal.
- Anxiety is about anticipated future danger.
- Anxiety sometimes has survival value
- Anxiety can be a Symptom or a Disorder.
- Shy may not mean anxious (Susan Cain book)
- Don't confuse Stress with Anxiety

Basic Instruments of Mental Health and Self Regulation

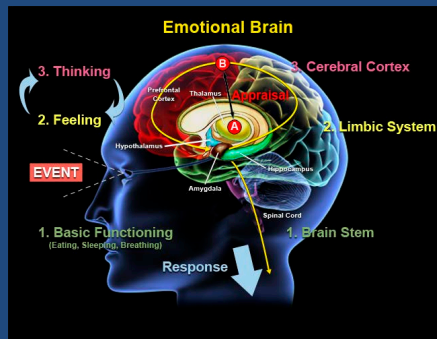


Emotion
Memory
Processing
Friend or Foe

Fight, Flight, Freeze

Alerting
Attention
Orienting
Creativity
Flexibility
Inhibition
Planning
Thinking
Organizing
Problem solving
Working memory

The Orchestra of Mental Health



SOUL

SPIRIT

SOCIAL/SELF

ETHICAL/GOOD

COGNITIVE
Reason

EMOTIONAL
Relate

BIOLOGY
Regulate

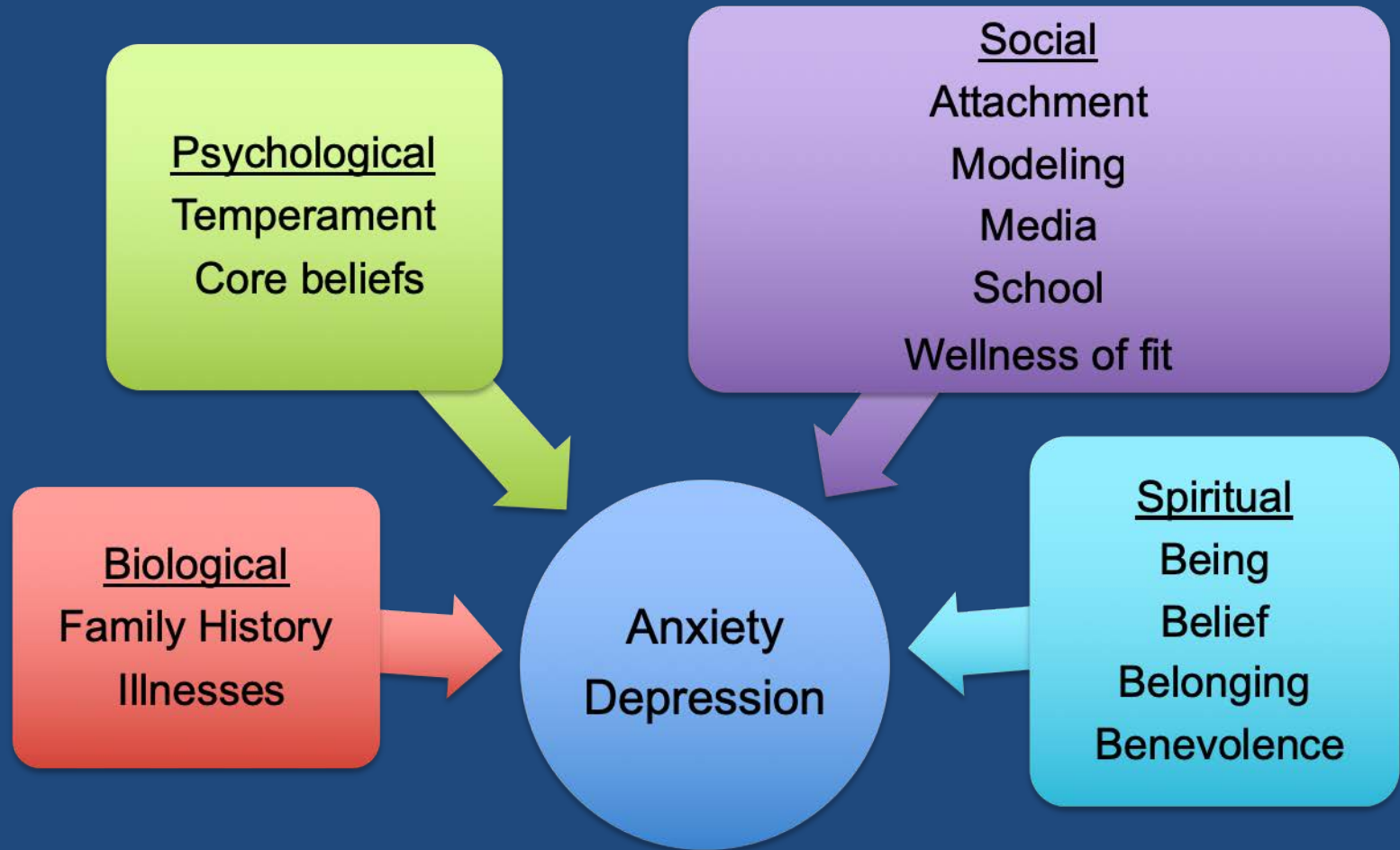


Meet your Emotions





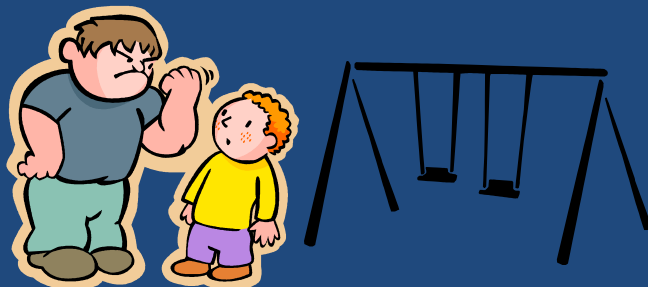
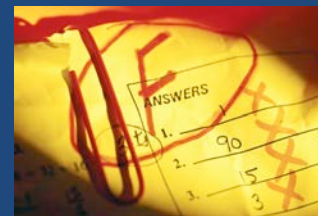
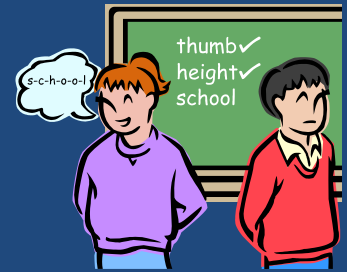
Where does Anxiety come from ?



Splitters and Clumpers

School Related Fears

- Separation from home
- Bus
- Performance anxiety
- Academics
- Interacting with peers or teachers
- Bullied
- Eating in front of others
- Using the bathroom
- Changing for gym



The Teen Years: The Most Challenging Decade in life... False solutions

- Sex
- Money
- Future
- Identity
- Academics
- Independence
- Sexual Orientation
- Social Competence



Chronic 24/7 arousal

↓
Dysregulated

↓
Overwhelmed

↓
Emotional depletion

↓
Burnout

↓
Drugs
Distractions
Social Media



What might Anxiety look like ?

Somatic
Thoughts
Behavioral
Experiential

Somatic

Tired

Breath

Heart rate

Tummy aches

Muscle tension

Sleep, Nightmares

Thoughts

Rigid

Attention

Hard time letting go

Unable to see success

Struggle to make choices

Concern about adult stuff

Negative view of self and others

Behavioural

Fight

Flight

Freeze

Repetitive unhelpful things

- Obsessions (thoughts) or compulsions (actions)
- Nail biting, Pull hair, Chew clothing, Pacing

Experiential

Dread

Moody

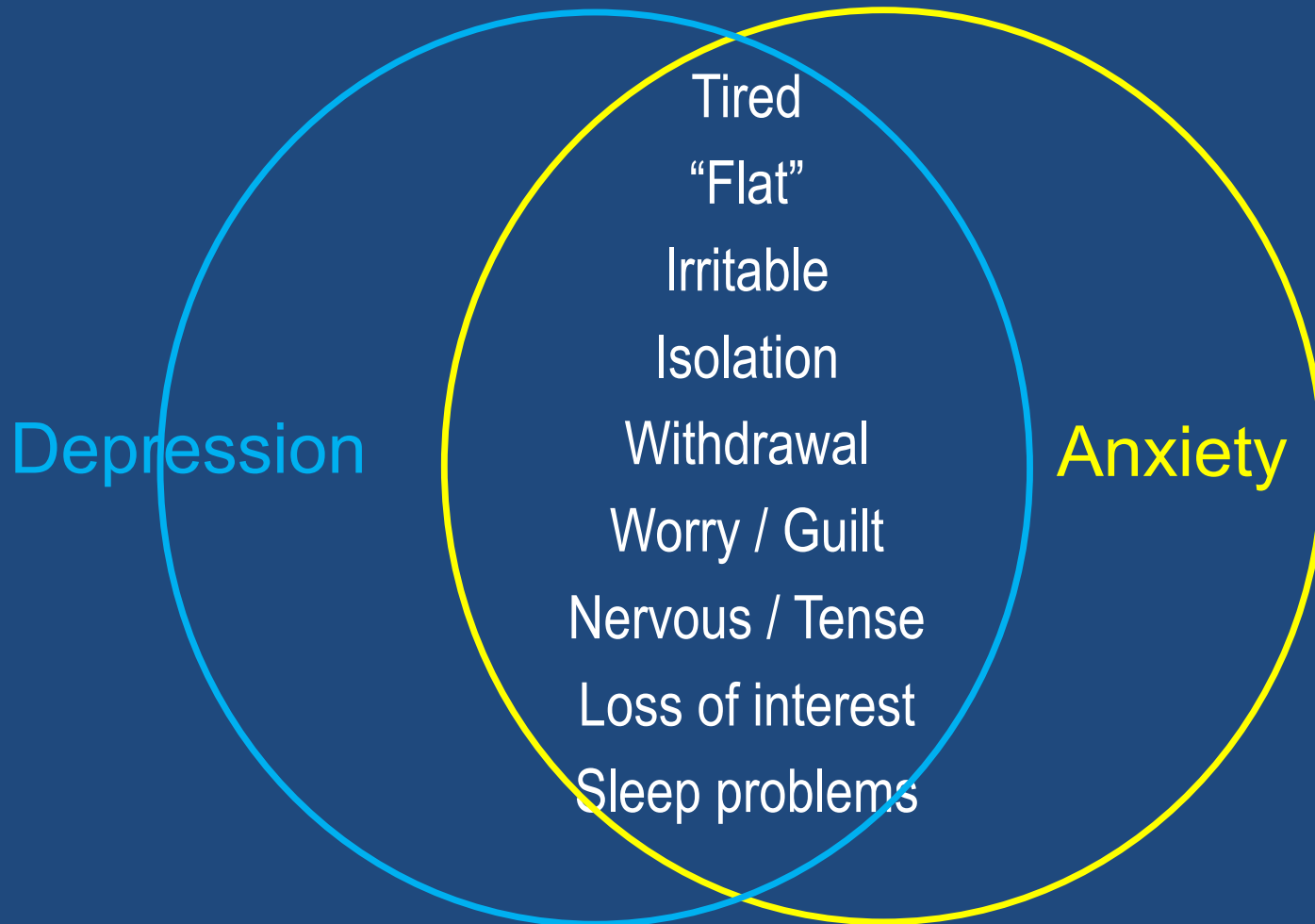
Irritable

Vigilant

Low self worth

Low self esteem

Depression & Anxiety are twins



Can Anxiety be normal ?

“Diagnosis”



Typical,
developmentally
appropriate

Severe

Functioning

Impairment or Distress makes it a “Disorder”

You can help even if you don’t have a diagnosis

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YOU WORRY TOO
MUCH... IT DOESN'T
DO ANY GOOD...

IT DOES FOR
ME... 95% OF
THE THINGS I
WORRY ABOUT
NEVER HAPPEN!



ledz vl wtz g

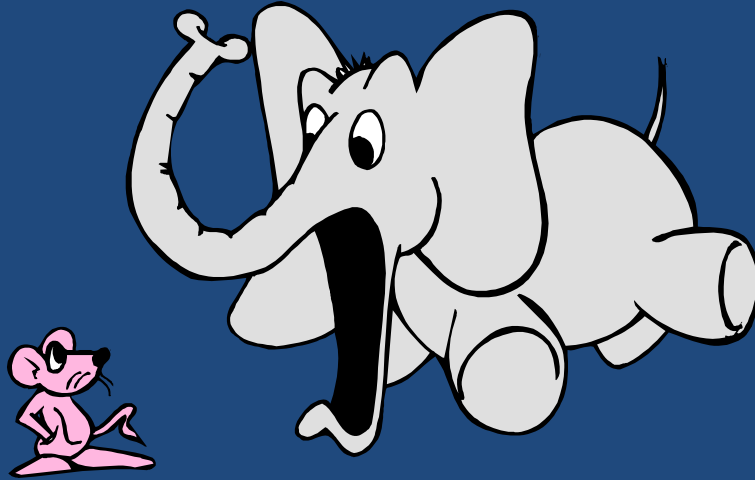
Is Worry helpful ?

Worrying is like a rocking chair.
It gives you something to do but
it doesn't get you anywhere.



~ Van Wilder

Are Feelings Real ?



“My feelings are real but they don’t always tell me the truth”

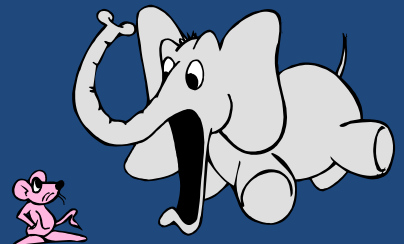
Common but untrue beliefs about Worry (or why worry does a good job of pretending to be my friend)

- Motivates me
- Prevents negative outcomes
- Helps find solutions to problems
- Protects me from unpleasant emotions
- Is a positive personality trait ...it means I care

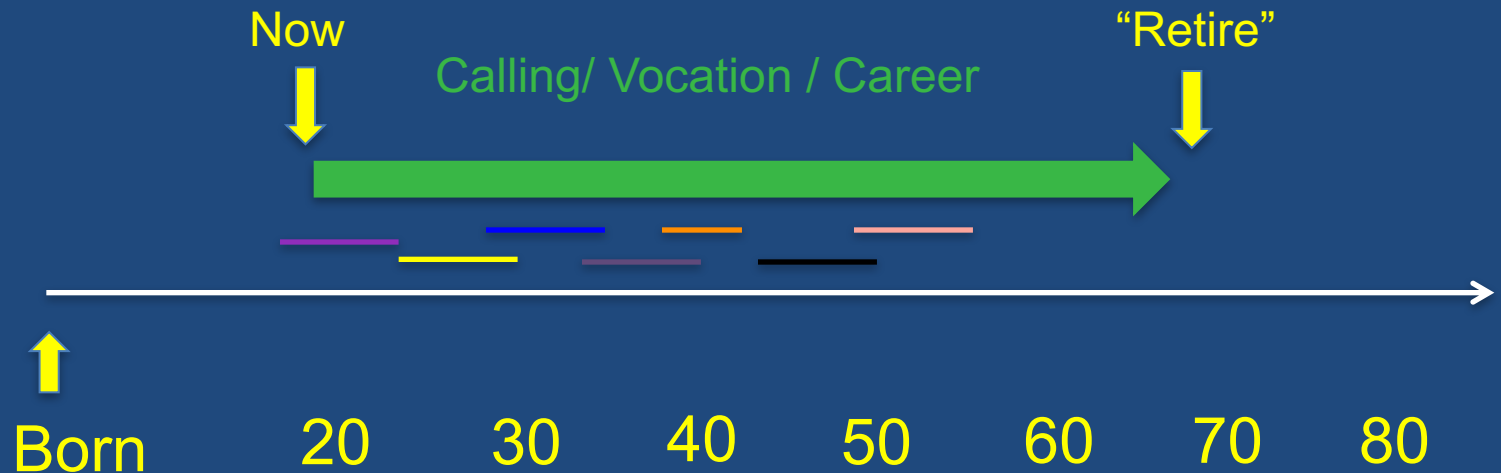
Francis, K. & Dugas, M. J. (2004). Assessing positive beliefs about worry: Validation of a structured interview. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37, 405-415.

The Big lies that feed those feelings

- Horrible things will happen to me if I am not completely **Safe, Loved and Worthy** all the time
- I am not good enough and I never will be
- I can have it all
- Effort is always rewarded

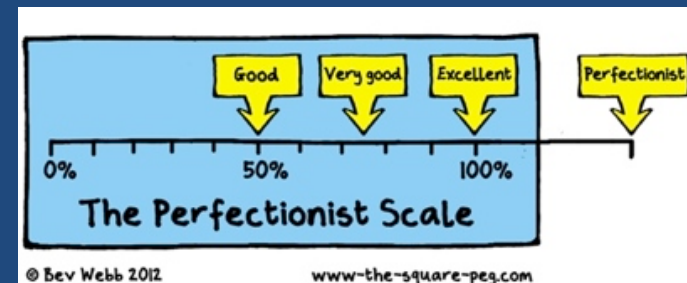


The Biggest lie of all: Tyranny of turning 18



Perfection is a false solution

- Perfectionism is unattainable = set up for failure = never feel good enough = give up or burn out trying
- Explore underlying belief about being perfect (S, L & W)
- Effort is most important
- Honor roll is 80 %
- No such thing as a mistake
- Celebrate “Not knowing”



Q :Why is Anxiety missed ?

A: Labeled as other things

- Oppositional, Defiant, Stubborn, Avoidant, Annoying, Manipulative, Attention seeking, Demanding, Confrontational, Sneaky, Lazy
- Remember F F F
- Comorbidity (ADHD, Depression, LD, others)

What is called for now ?

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Mindfulness : Process

Attention



Awareness



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Wiser Action



Better Outcome = Curriculum = My Life

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What can I do to help ?

4 R



Mindfulness invites a healthier relationship

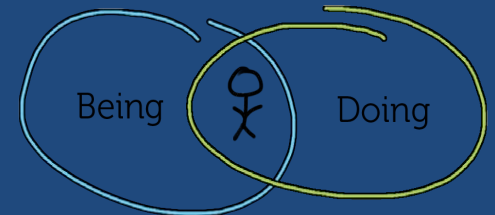
Thou



Whole
Worthy
Complete



What is **going on** for you?
What do **you need** ?
What is **called for**?



Me



What am **I doing** ?
Am I getting **in the way** ?
What **are you learning** from me ?
Is what I am doing **working** ?

Anxiety can cause lower functioning

Academic

Attendance, Underachievement

Behavioral

Avoidant ,Oppositional

Cognitive

Rigid thinking, poor problem solving, poor attention

Developmental

Stunted

Emotional

Stunted, hopeless, helpless

Family

Power struggles, tired, bedtime issues

Physical

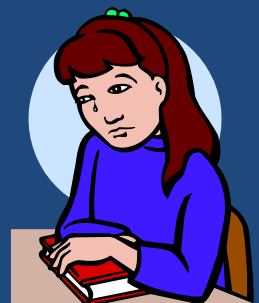
Gym avoidance

Social

Loneliness, Tobacco, Alcohol and MJ use

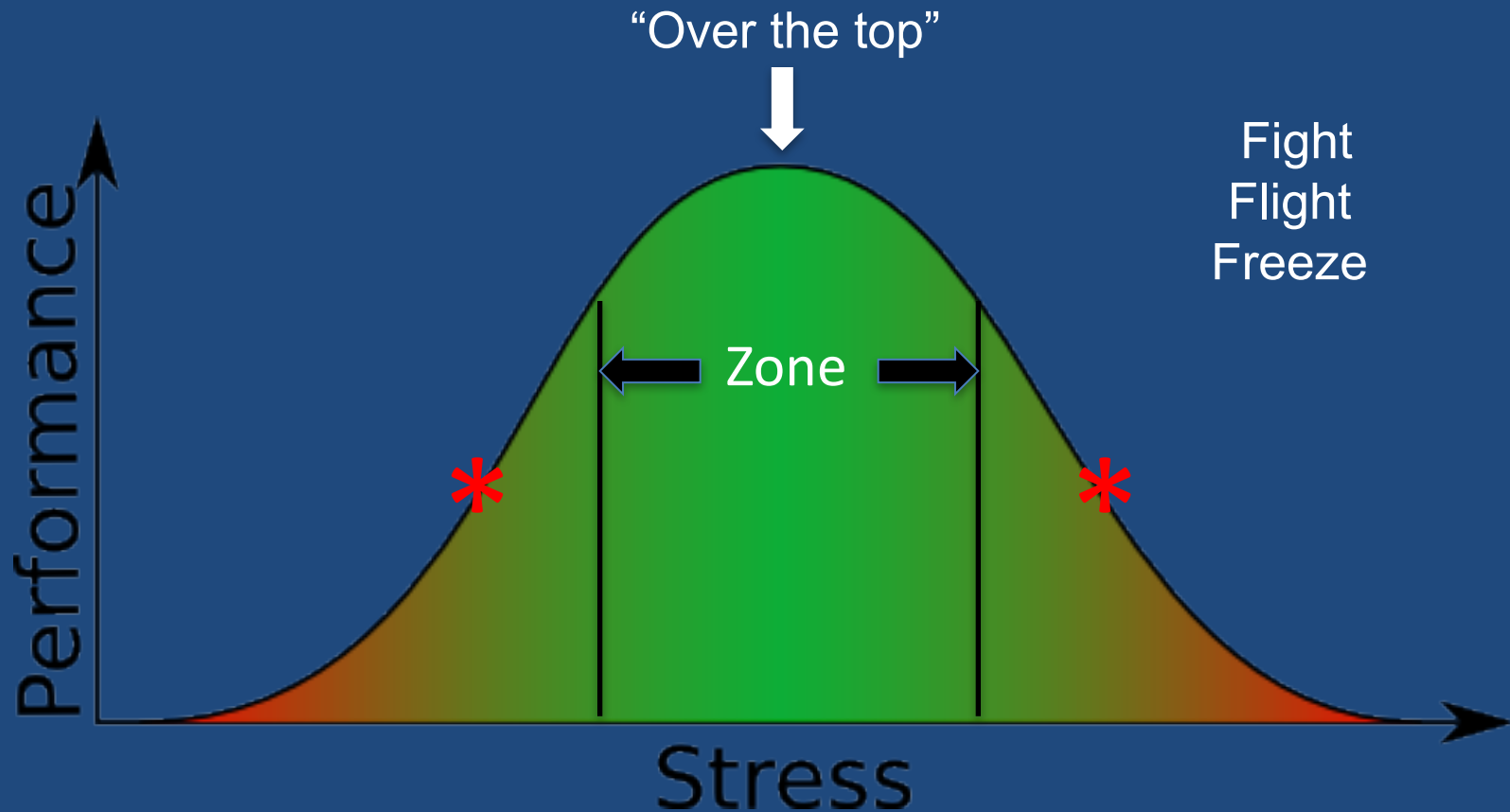
Spiritual

Empty,Joyless,



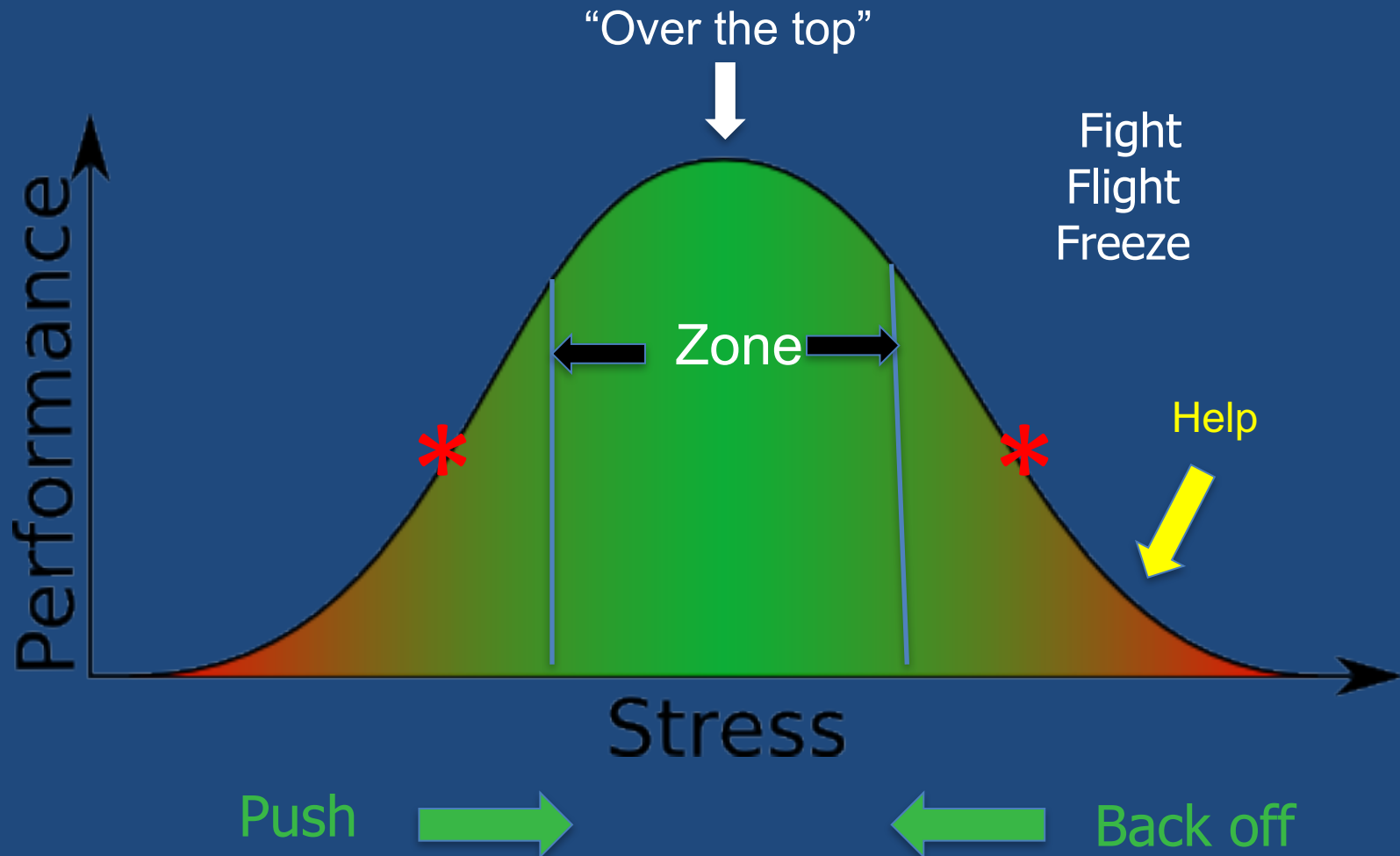
Focus on the Coping, not the Stress

Stress is a challenge to the stability of a system



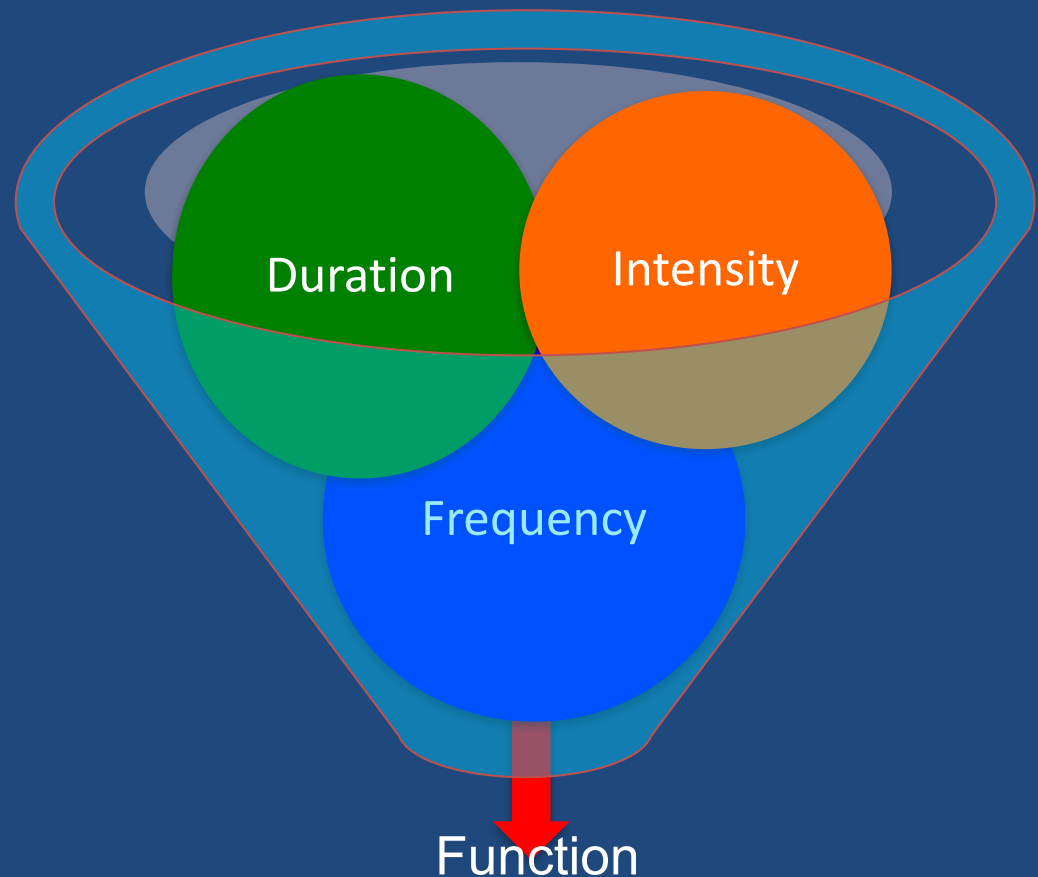
No stress	OK stress	Distress	MH problem	Disorder
Dead !	Coping well	Sweating	Straining	Trouble

How much do I push ?



Where do I back off and where do I add ?

- Academic
- Behavioral
- Cognitive
- Developmental
- Emotional
- Family
- Physical
- Social
- Screens
- Spiritual
- Volunteering
- Work



Thoughts (Type and Content)

Distortions

Should
Mental Filter
Labeling
All or nothing
Personalizing
Attribution error
Catastrophizing
Overgeneralize
Magnify or Minimize
Disqualify positives
Emotional reasoning
Jump to conclusions

- Mind reading
- Predict future

Content

Alone
Safety
Illness
Death
Adult stuff
Perfectionism
Social fitting in
Hurting others feelings



Responding to Anxiety



STOP	START
Dismissing experience	Acknowledge feelings
Your own Panic	Stay calm even if you do not what to do
Treat A as emergency & failure	Treat A as practice
Internalizing anxiety	Externalizing it (horrible room mate)
Reassuring	Encouraging
Avoiding/Removing /Rescueing	Exposing/ Experimenting
Solving	Coaching/ problem solving
Certainty	Curiosity
I'm uncomfortable	I am comfortable feeling uncomfortable
Heat of moment	Proactive conversations
Jump in too fast and assume	Explore and Expand to understand
“Worrier”	“Warrior”

Responding to Anxiety



STOP	START
Beating yourself up for worrying	Worry is typical and we all have it
Assuming a Feeling = Fact	Is a Feeling a Fact ?
Assuming a Thought = Truth	Is a Thought the Truth? Worry Thermometer
Probability	Possibility
Assuming it is a Horror	Seeing it as a Hassle ?
Being unfriendly to yourself	Being your own best friend ?
Beating up	Building up
Thinking positive	Be Realistic and Constructive (R & C)
Trying to talk out of it	Worry Thermometer
External reassurance	Internal Mastery and Pleasure

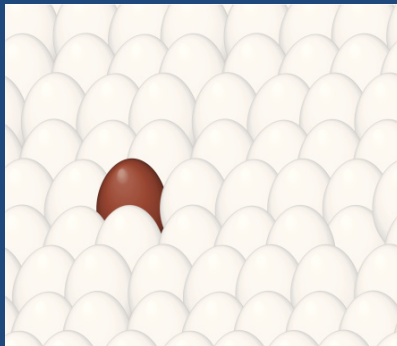
Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts Realistic and Constructive

- Are you falling into
 - “Worry Monster”
 - “Thinking Trap”
 - “Stinking thinking”
 - “Red thoughts”
- What is the **worst thing** that can happen ?
- What would you **tell a friend** if he/she had the same thought ?
- What would a **friend say to you** about your thoughts ?

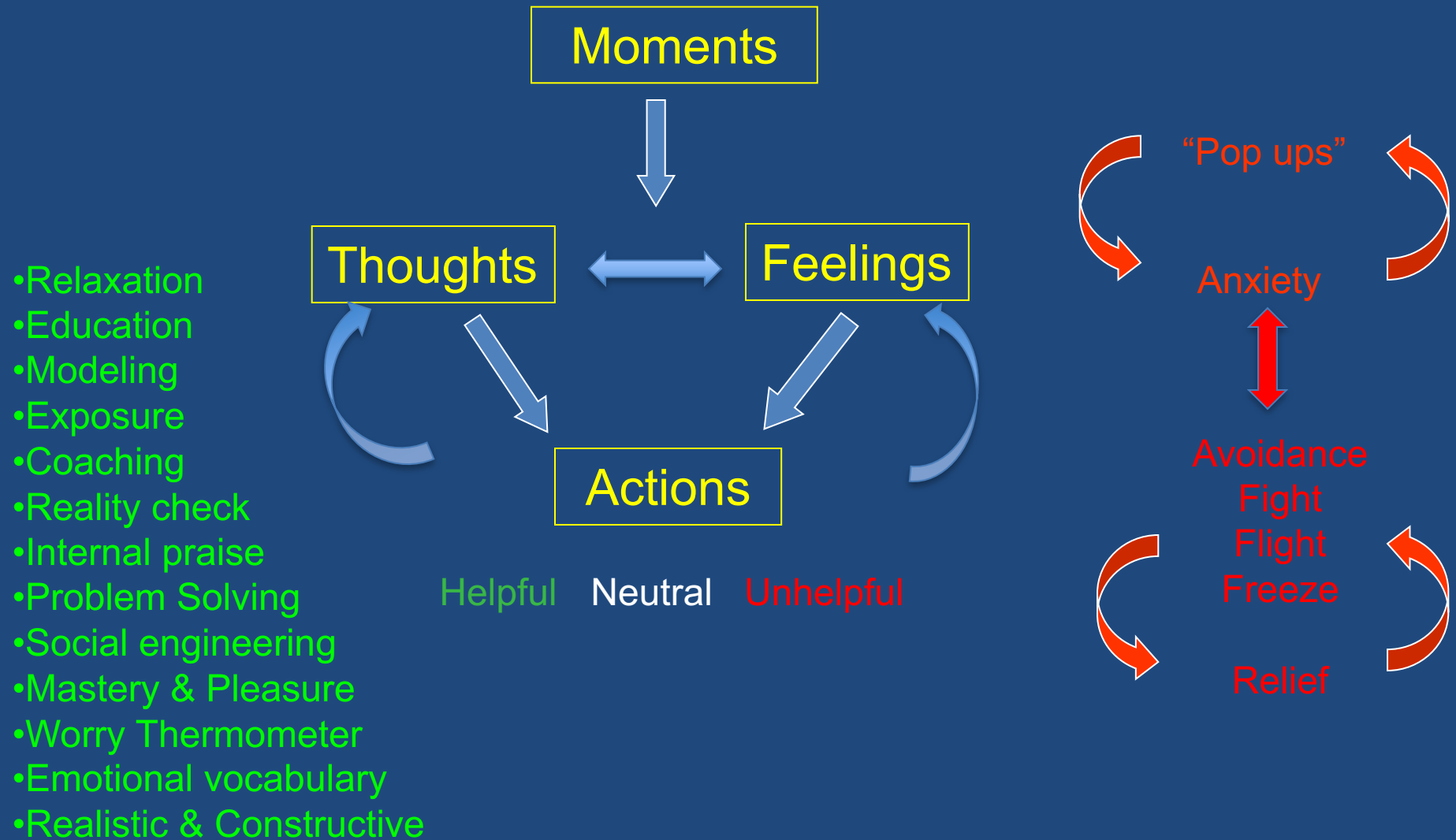
Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

Looking for exceptions !

- Are there times when you didn't give in to anxiety?
- How did you do that?
- What can you do to make that success happen again ?



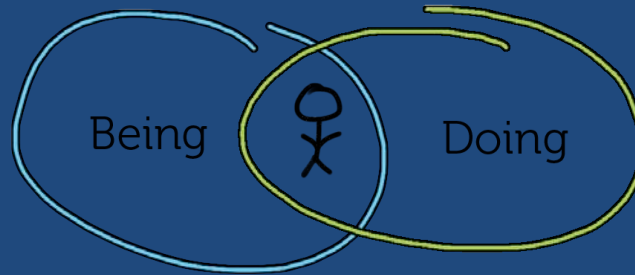
If things aren't better, what ingredients are missing ?



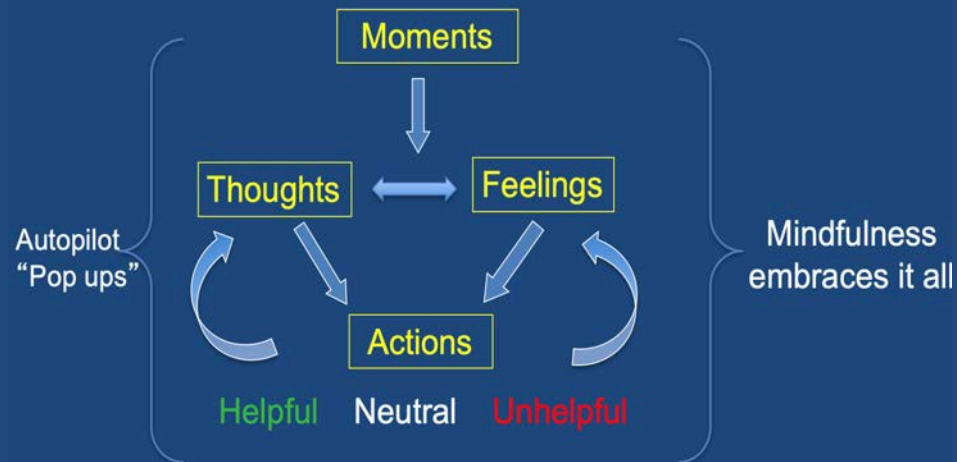
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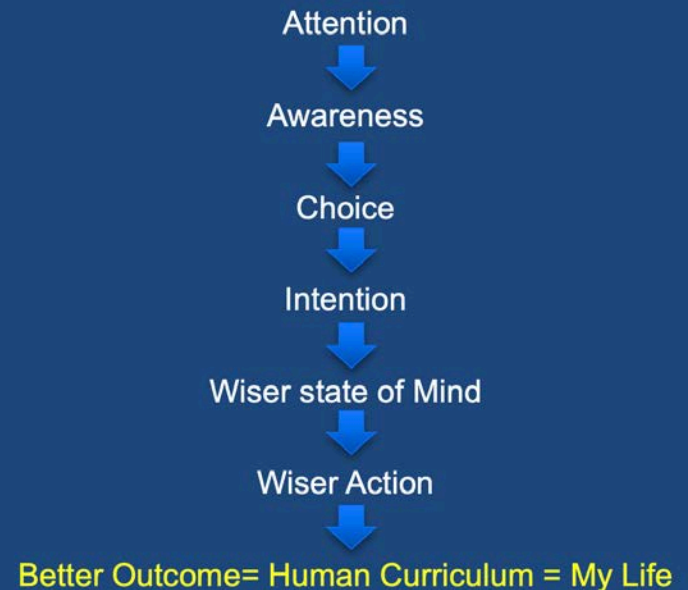
How I am being while I am doing my doing



Mindfulness as Content



Mindfulness as process



STOP & RAIN



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Take a breath

Observe

Proceed



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Natural arising

Hero's Journey : Ingredients on the Path



*"In the stillness of the quiet,
if we listen,
we can hear the whisper of the heart"*

Howard Thurman

Joy
Love
Trust
Dignity
Humility
Gentility
Attention
Curiosity
Empathy
Patience
Vigilance
Kindness
Creativity
Presence
Letting Go
Awareness
Acceptance
Non Striving
Forgiveness
Compassion
Not Knowing
Engagement
Non Judgment
Beginner's Mind
Non Attachment

The Quality life we all want

- Academic
- Behavioral
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Are you missing any ingredients ?

Resources

- [Anxietycanada.com](https://anxietycanada.com)
- Quiet Power : The Secret Strengths of Introverted kids.
Susan Cain.
- Anxiety Disorders Association of America adaa.org
- teenmentalhealth.org

